

A BLACK CIVILIZATION

688 at a totemic emblem they are killed by their own group, with the help
 672 of any other group that has been offended by their actions. The clan
 to which they belong is not held responsible except in a minor way.
 Some years ago the Liagaomir clan was holding a totemic ceremony,
 using its carpet snake totemic emblems (painted wooden trumpets).
 Two women stole up to the ceremonial ground and watched the men
 blowing the trumpet, went back to the women's camp and told them
 what they had seen. When the men came back to camp and heard of
 their behavior, Yanindja, the leader, said, "When will we kill them?"
 • [696] Everyone replied, "Immediately."

The two women were instantly put to death by members of their own
 clan with the help of the men from the other group.

Maritja, one of the most conventional men in the society, was
 making a shark totemic emblem. He had hidden it in a hollow tree
 near the border of the men's ceremonial grounds. Some women be-
 longing to the visiting Burera tribe had walked near it. This had
 been established by the identification of their footprints by Maritja
 and his brothers. Maritja went down to the Burera camp and said to
 the assembled group, "You all know I never make trouble unless there
 is very good cause for it. You know I look for peace, but your women
 have done my people a great wrong. They have walked near the place
 where I had my totem hidden. I shall be sick and maybe I'll die."

The Burera men said, "You are right. If they have done this you may
 kill them if you wish." Nothing further was done since it was not
 considered a very great wrong; but had the women actually looked
 at his totemic emblem he could have killed them, and their clan would
 not have retaliated.

688 Munyirir's wife was burning a patch of brush while hunting for
 bandicoot. The husband had hidden the string for his totemic emblem
 in the bushes. The fire destroyed it. The string belonged to the Daiuror
 clan. They tried to kill her and would have succeeded, but she escaped
 to the mission with the help of her husband. He was felt to have done
 wrong in helping her.

A young Warumeri clansman illicitly viewed a stone totemic em-
 blem that is situated on Eleho Island. The men of the clan followed
 his footsteps and saw what he had done. When they caught him they
 immediately killed him.

A Mandelpui boy came upon two old Liaalaomir men making a
 totemic emblem. When they saw him they said, "Come look," and
 with smiles and gestures indicated their approval of his having a closer

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view of their totem. This was to put him off his guard; a few days later they ambushed and killed him. 688

If one of the members of a clan breaks a number of the ritualistic taboos he is seldom killed by members of his own clan. Usually the old men arrange for his death by members of another clan. If such offenses went unpunished the whole structure of Murngin society would fall to pieces, since in time the women and children would be aware of the secrets of the men's associations, and with the knowledge common, the ceremonial ideas would lose their significance. 688 696

Should a young man make a totemic emblem without the permission of the clan's ceremonial leader, the usual method of dealing with this insult to the clan would be to kill him. 688

The finding of the first wild bees' nest, because of its magical significance, is a very important matter to a young boy. Should an older man eat any of it or not allow the boy to consume the honey that was found, the father and father-in-law of the boy would start a camp fight with the man's group. 688 628

At the beginning of the dry season all the underbrush is burned off to secure better hunting, frequently destroying a log coffin. The dead man's clan is always offended, but killing seldom results, for the deed is felt to have been accidental, and no strong feeling surrounds the bones of a dead man. 688 673

The use of obscenity and profanity against a man always results in a camp fight. Profanity usually reflects not only on the man but on his clan and carries an incestuous connotation. Occasionally quarrels result from an unfair division of the game killed in the hunt, but not always open warfare, since those who feel they had a right to the game are near relatives whose solidarity is too strong to allow fighting. 578

Adulteries may cause a husband to give only his wife a thorough beating, but usually the lover is also held responsible and a fight is a consequence. The fights are ordinarily of the nirimaot-yolno (a fight within the camp) type. If the lover attempts to steal her the more serious narrup (secret killing) and maringo (night attack on a camp) are used, because wife-stealing is a much more serious offense. 684

A number of customs attend these killings that serve as causes for war. When the body of a man killed in a fight or by magic is disinterred, the finger bones are given both to the near relatives of the victim's clan and to related groups as relics to remind them of their duty of blood vengeance. The relic is wrapped with fiber string and covered with beeswax and parrot feathers. It is placed at the bottom 765 628